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AUTHOR	Chance, Edward, W.
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ABSTRACT

This study of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and contract secondary school administrators creates a BIA administrator profile and examines differences between Indian and non-Indian administrators. Two different instruments were mailed to 54 administrators. The first, with a return rate of 44%, was a questionnaire relating to administrative duties and activities. The second, with a return rate of 41%, was the Leadership Practices Inventory, a leadership style instrument. Both surveys were examined for demographic and ethnic differences. Eighty percent of the respondents were male with an average age of 40-45. The typical administrator had been a classroom teacher for 7.38 years before becoming a principal. The average term of service in the current school was 5.4 years. Respondents' average length of service in administration was 11.71 years. The study found few differences between Native American and non-Indian administrators regarding daily activities or leadership style. The typical administrator arrives 40 minutes early for work and stays an hour late, maintaining high daily visibility in the cafeteria, teacher's lounge, and school halls. The data suggest that all BIA administrators are involved in activities and extracurricular events. Both groups tended to describe themselves as "inspiring" and "modeling," while Indian principals tended to choose the word "challenging." Conversely, however, all respondents scored only moderately on areas of staff collaboration, enabling subordinates, and recognizing employees when they achieve. Administrators perceive themselves as instructional leaders, but they actually spend much of their time as managers or disciplinarians. The document suggests instructional leadership as an area for possible reform. (TES)

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The BIA/Contract School Secondary Administrator: Characteristics and Leadership Style

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Edward W. Chance

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Edward W. Chance, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019

National Rural Education Association
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ABSTRACT

This study of Bureau of Indian Affairs and Contract School secondary administrators found that few differences existed between those administrators who were native American and those who were non-Indian. The primary differences concerned levels of experience as a teacher or an administrator. A leadership instrument also ascertained few differences in the type of leadership style exhibited by either ethnic group.

THE BIA/CONTRACT SCHOOL SECONDARY ADMINISTRATOR: CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

INTRODUCTION:

The effective education of Indian youth in this country must become a paramount issue if Indian people are to survive and maintain their identity. The education of these students becomes even more important when one considers the drop-out rate of one of the largest "at risk" groups in this country. A special report published by Education Week (1989) estimated that an attrition rate of approximately 29-50% of Indian students is the operational norm in schools primarily populated by Native Americans.

The building level administrator is one of the essential factors in the creation of a school that educates all of its youth (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1985; Lipham, 1978; Rutherford, 1985; and, Sweeney, 1982). Administrators today must be much more than managers. They must be leaders who understand how to establish educational goals; how to involve others; how to effectively communicate; how to be informed decision makers; and how to consistently manifest proactive leadership postures (Croghan and Lake, 1984; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982). The educational reform movement of the 1980's, typified by the quest for an effective school

(Edmonds, 1979; Foster and Boloz, 1980), has validated the influence of educational leadership on student achievement.

The passage of PL 95-561 placed greater responsibility on administrators in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools as well as tribally controlled contract schools for the establishment of an effective instructional environment (Boloz and Foster, 1980). According to the Education Directory of the Office of Indian Education Programs (1988), there were "103 elementary and secondary schools...operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and 65 elementary and secondary schools...operated by Indian tribes under contract with the BIA" (p.i.). The vast majority of these schools are found in the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Minnesota although these schools operate in as diverse locations as Mississippi, Washington, and Alaska. Typically these schools are rural, and are often found in a reservation setting, where social problems such as poverty, alcoholism and single-parent households abound. The isolation and ruralness of many of these schools affirms that the role of the school administrator is crucial to the success of the Indian student.

The Study:

In light of the important role of school administrators, this study was conducted in order to gather data about the

leadership in BIA schools and contract schools which serve as crucial educational delivery systems to Native Americans. This study was undertaken because of:

1) a deep concern regarding the type of education Indian youth receive;
2) a desire to ascertain a general profile of the administrators in these schools, and,
3) an aspiration to determine whether or not differences exist between those schools where the administrator is Indian and those schools where the administrator is of another ethnic group.

A survey was conducted with selected BIA and contract secondary school administrators throughout the country. A total of 54 surveys consisting of two separate instruments were mailed to administrators identified in the Education Directory of the Office of Indian Education Programs (1988). One instrument was a descriptive questionnaire consisting of 38 questions relating to various administrative duties and activities of the individual respondents as well as numerous demographic questions. The return rate for the first instrument was 44%. Although this rate was below what was originally deemed acceptable, it was decided to accept this when repeated mailings and phone calls failed to generate additional responses.

The second segment of the survey was a leadership style questionnaire developed by Kouzes and Posner (1988) and used with their permission. This instrument, The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), consisted of thirty behavioral statements in which each administrator was asked to rate him/herself as to the frequency that he/she practiced the stated behavior. For instance a statement such as "I involve others in planning the actions we take" would then be followed by five Likert type possibilities ranging from "rarely" to "very frequently". Each answer was tabulated and correlated to five leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (1988). These practices were: 1)Challenging the Process; 2) Inspiring a Shared Vision; 3) Enabling Others to Act; 4) Modeling the Way; and 5) Encouraging the Heart. The higher the score in each of the five areas, the more likely one would exhibit the described leadership style. All questions were scored by a computer program developed by the authors of LPI.

The reliability of the LPI instrument was addressed by Kouzes and Posner (1988) thusly:

> First, the LPI has shown sound psychometric properties; each scale is internally reliable. That is, the items are highly correlated within each scale. Factor analysis indicate that the scales are generally orthogonal: they do not all measure the same phenomenon. Test-retest reliability is high. Second, results from the LPI have high face and predictive validity. The results make sense to people, and they predict high performing leaders as well as moderate and low performing ones (p.4).

They also indicated that scores on the self-reported version of this instrument "tend to be somewhat higher than scores on the LPI-Other" (p.5). The LPI-Other was not utilized because it would have involved identifying a number of specific teachers for each administrator surveyed. The return rate for the LPI questionnaire was 41%.

The data generated from the first questionnaire was reviewed for overall results as well as for any significant demographic differences, between Native American and non-Indian administrators. The results of the LPI instrument were examined comprehensively as well as for any ethnic incongruence.

Results

The results of the self-reported questionnaire determined the following about the responding administrators:

1) Eighty percent were male and 20% female.
2) The typical administrator had been a classroom teacher for 7.38 years before becoming a principal.
3) The average length in administration was 11.71 years.
4) The average tenure of administration in BIA or contract schools was 5.68 years.
5) The average length of time as an administrator in their current school was 5.4 years.

6) The average age of the respondents was 40-45 years old.

7) Of those responding, 38.5% were Native American while 61.5% represented other ethnic groups.

8) Sixty-three percent of the respondents were reared more than 100 miles from their current school.

9) The average principal indicated a diverse education with 63% holding either a specialist or doctorate degree.

10) Only 8% of the respondents would not elect to become an administrator again if given the choice.

Typical administrators indicated they arrived at school approximately 40 minutes early and stayed at least one hour after the close of the school day. None of the respondents indicated teaching duties but 8% did serve as an athletic coach. Fifty-four percent attended one to two extracurricular activities weekly while 33% were present at three to four activities.

The typical administrator claimed a high visibility in the cafeteria, the teachers' lounge, and the halls of the school. Sixty-seven percent stated they spent time in a teachers classroom once a week or less often. Seventeen percent indicated they were not in the classes even monthly. Only 13% were in the classrooms on a daily basis. Weekly

faculty meetings was the normal means of communication with the faculty for 58% of the principals. The remainder of the respondents held either biweekly (23%) or monthly (15%) faculty meetings. The principals also revealed that 92% of them attempted to praise their teachers and the primary delivery mode for this was verbal. Twenty-five percent wrote personal notes although none indicated ever placing a laudatory note in a teacher's personnel file.

In the area of staff development, 96% indicated regular attendance at such activities, while 81% reported they had conducted staff development activities for their teachers. Regular attendance at professional conferences was reported by 66% of the respondents; however, 4% indicated they had not attended a session in the past year. All but 19% had attended some type of national professional convention with 20% having attended more than 3 during his/her career. Forty-four percent indicated they had read between one and five of the national reports on education while 36% had read between five and ten.

When the respondents were asked to identify their primary responsibilities, 57% viewed instructional leadership as their first priority. Manager was a distant second with a 23% response while discipline and other each received a 10% response. Curriculum designer was not identified as a primary responsibility by any of the respondents.

Further examination of the self reported data does not support the instructional leadership assertion. When asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on a daily basis in four areas, the averaged responses were as follows:

51.68% on general managerial duties

21.3% on discipline.

16.4% on working directly with teachers, and

8.12% on meeting with parents.

The data suggests that the principals responded to a desire to be an instructional leader but were primarily managers. Instructional leadership necessitates an understanding of what is happening in teachers' classrooms yet only 13% were in those classes on a daily basis. Sadly, as stated, 17% were not even in classrooms on a monthly basis. The expressed view of instructional leadership is simply not supported by the data.

Ethnic Differences

In addition to reviewing the collective data, differences between Native American and non-Indian administrators were examined. As previously indicated, 38.5% were American Indian while 61.5% of the administrators were of other ethnic groups. Of those who indicated they were Native American, the majority were three-quarters to full blood quantum. Few

differences other than ethnicity and degrees of experience were found between the two groups.

1) Native Americans had taught for an average of 5.6 years prior to becoming an administrator while non-Indians had taught for an average of 9.1 years.
2) Native Americans had 8.2 years of administrative experience compared to 14.1 for non-Indians.
3) American Indians averaged 4.9 years as an administrator in BIA or contract schools as well as 3.5 years in their current school. Non-Indians averaged 6.2 years in the BIA or contract schools with 6.7 years in their current setting.
4) Thirty percent of the Native American principals were female while only 13% of the non-Indians were of this gender.
5) Eighty percent of the Indians held weekly faculty meetings while only 46% of the non- Indians did so.

Perhaps the most significant aspect in the comparison was not the number of overt differences but rather the degree of homogeneity between both ethnic groups in the daily operation of the school. An identical 55% of native Americans and non-Indians identified instructional leadership as their primary job. Both groups indicated that the majority of their daily routine was consumed by general managerial duties. Discipline

and contact with teachers were ranked as second and third respectively in terms of amount of time allocated to these activities. The reported total time spent in individual classrooms also was very similar, except that 33% of the American Indians were in classes monthly or less often while only 6% of the non-Indians fell into this category. Each ethnic group reported practically the same level of involvement in activities such as local staff development activities, attendance at state and national meetings, and pursuit of degrees of higher learning. More Indians (40%) reported holding the doctorate than did non-Indians (4%).

Both ethnic groups are remarkably similar. The primary exception is that non-Indians have more teaching and administrative experience. Both groups envision themselves as instructional leaders yet fail to spend an appropriate amount of time in this area. Instead they reported that they were much more involved in time consuming managerial duties. Finally, the degree of homogeneity between the two groups indicates that the school as an institution remains singularly similar, regardless of whom the building principal is.

Leadership

Responses to the LPI instrument consisting of thirty self rated responses provided further insight into the work environment of these principals. The primary questions were:

1) Given the five areas to be scored (Challenging, Inspiring, Enabling, Modeling, Encouraging): What areas would represent the strength of these selected administrators?
2) Was the leadership exhibited by Native Americans significantly different from that of their non-Indian counterparts?
3) Did either of the ethnic groups score in the high category on the LPI Instrument?

Although the individual respondents showed some variation in leadership on the LPI, overall there was a remarkable degree of congruity. Both groups of administrators, Indian and non-Indian, were in the high category in the areas of Inspiring and Modeling. Scores at the 70% or better were considered to be high. Scores between 30-69% were medium and scores less than 30% were low. The Indian administrators also scored above the 70% in the area of Challenging. Both groups scored in the moderate range in Enabling and Encouraging. Chart 1 shows the mean responses and the percentile scores for each group.

LPI SELF RATING RESPONSES

	INDIAN		NON-INDIAN	
	$\bar{x}$ Response	Estimated Percentile	$\bar{x}$ Response	Estimated Percentile
Challenging	25.0	75	23.1	50
Inspiring	23.8	70	23.7	70
Enabling	25.3	60	25.7	60
Modeling	25.2	75	24.4	70
Encouraging	24.3	65	23.6	60

The scores on the LPI indicated that Native American and non-Indian principals score in the high category in Inspiring and Modeling. Leaders who inspire are those who are able to develop a vision of a desired future, are good communicators, and develop a degree of commitment to the vision. As modelers, they understand their values, are good planners, and set good examples of organizational expectations (Kouzes and Posner, 1988). The Native American administrator perceived him/herself as especially strong in the area of Challenging while the non-Indian administrator perceived this category as his/her lowest area. Challenging, according to Kouzes and Posner (1988), represented the desire to "seek out new opportunities" as well as a "willingness to change the status quo" (p.2). Challengers are risk takers.

Both ethnic groups were in the moderate range in the areas of Enabling and Encouraging. Enabling, according to Kouzes and Posner (1988), was symbolized as the development of collaborative goals through the active involvement of others in the planning process. They also define encouraging as the ability to recognize individual contributions to the organization, to establish goals, and as the leader's ability to praise those contributors for their efforts. The moderate score in these areas corresponded to the results of the self-reported questionnaire which established the failure of the principals to utilize their time as instructional leaders, although they indicated that this was an important goal. The focus on management of the school by both ethnic groups with minimal staff collaboration cannot help but hinder the creation of an effective learning environment. The administrators perceived an ability to inspire and model, and for one group to challenge, yet failed to enable their subordinates and sufficiently recognize them when they achieve. In other words, both the LPI and the demographic questionnaire indicated an ability to "talk the talk" but a functional failure in "walking the walk".

Conclusion and Implications

The BIA and contract school administrators appear to be individuals who are actively involved in a variety of daily

activities, extra curricular events, and the maintenance of their schools. They are gratified as administrators and enjoy the daily challenges of the job. They actively seek to improve themselves and regularly participated in a variety of local regeneration activities as well as those activities offered at state and national levels.

They perceive themselves as instructional leaders but spend their days focusing on managerial duties or discipline. Their leadership indicates an understanding of what they wish to accomplish and a desire to set good examples by their visibility and involvement in various daily activities. Their focus on management and maintenance makes it difficult to become a leader who is a collaborator, a praiser, and shared decision maker. Any expected cultural leadership differences between Native Americans and non-Indians simply failed to be manifested. Organizational maintenance appears to be the focus for both ethnic groups, although the Indian administrator is more willing to be a risk taker than is his/her non-Indian counterpart. There are a variety of explanations for this one major leadership difference. Culture may play a part, although, the answer may be that Indian administrators have not been bureaucratically socialized to the extent of non-Indian administrators.

It is clear that one should not attempt to label the BIA and Contract school principals as effective or ineffective, good or bad. They idealistically prefer to be instructional leaders but organizational obligations take precedence and control the focus of their daily activities. However, if the American belief, so readily espoused, that all students should be educated to the best of their ability, is ever to become the operational norm in these schools, then it is imperative that as educational administrators, they must develop skills that will allow them to achieve an optimum learning environment. This means that the administrator must not only recognize what it is he/she wishes to accomplish but also develop skills which empower others and which celebrates others' achievements. Only when principals become proactive leaders, and not managers, will the education of children improve.

Finally, given the nature, location, and clientele of the BIA and Contract schools, these administrators must be the best possible. It is crucial that leaders in these schools understand they hold the key to success for a student population that has been too often neglected and ignored. This necessitates skills and abilities beyond that of organizational manager. Whether or not administrators in these schools have those skills remains in doubt. It is an

inescapable reality that both Indian and non-Indian administrators must be better prepared if Native American youth are to be successful participants in an increasingly complex world.

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